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16. **Health education.**—To increase the knowledge of the general public on means relating to disease prevention and personal hygiene, having in mind the shortage of medical personnel and the necessity at this time for the conservation of man power.

- (a) By the employment of medical sanitarians, having special experience in educational methods and their use in cooperation with Red Cross, National and State organizations (Council of National Defense, State sections of the Council of National Defense), State and municipal health departments, State industrial commissions, volunteer medical service corps, and State and National health associations.

NOTE.—The prevention of the following diseases will be the special objects of health education: Malaria, typhoid fever, hookworm, venereal diseases, pellagra, tuberculosis, pneumonia, cerebrospinal meningitis, and excessive infant mortality. Occupational diseases, (see section on industrial hygiene).

- (b) By advocating and assisting in the securing of full-time State, district, and local health officers.
- (c) By stimulation of States and municipalities to the acceptance of their full responsibility for public-health conditions and the support of health activities by adequate appropriations.
- (d) Detail of service officers to State health organizations and, when necessary, to city organizations, especially in communities engaged in war work.

17. **Collection of morbidity reports.**—Extension of disease reporting to be accomplished through the collection of adequate reports of disease prevalence.

- (a) By the extension of the present system of collaborating epidemiologists.
- (b) For the industrial group of the population, through the appointment of industrial surgeons and record clerks in various industrial establishments, such industrial surgeons to be appointed by the Public Health Service, at a nominal salary, so as to place them under the direction and control of the Service, and the remainder of the salary to be paid by the industrial establishments to which they are attached. In addition to reporting disease, these surgeons will act as medical and surgical officers and sanitarians. They will also report on community sanitation.

REPORTING VENEREAL DISEASES.

By C. C. PIERCE, Assistant Surgeon General, United States Public Health Service.

A recent instance illustrates a point of view which has occasionally come to the attention of the Public Health Service. An elderly physician, who is a leading dermatologist and syphilologist, a professor in the school of medicine of the State university, and a leading man throughout the State, told one of his classes that he would, himself, never report a case of venereal disease, and advised them never to do so. The intelligence, ability, and patriotism of this gentleman are not for a moment questioned. But it is equally certain that he made a profound error in judgment which, were it to be made generally, would have the most serious results at this time.

The older physicians were trained, as young men, in a school of medical ethics which was extremely individualistic. Social medicine,

in common with most social work, had not yet developed. The rights of the individual patient counted for everything, the rights of those about him for nothing. With the development of the modern social spirit this has of necessity greatly changed. The acute contagious diseases were the first to be required to be reported. There was opposition to this among the physicians of 25 years ago because they felt that the rights of their patients were being infringed upon. Public opinion, however, sustained the eminently wise measures which made it compulsory to report these diseases. Later typhoid fever and other diseases whose communicability was established were added to the list of reportable diseases.

Still later, tuberculosis was made reportable, and very great opposition at once developed. This was in part because of the chronic nature of this disease, which made the patient for a long time an object of solicitude and attention, and in part because, in those days, when the disease had advanced sufficiently to be recognized, it usually terminated fatally. This had given a certain stigma to the disease in the minds of the laity. Physicians, therefore, felt very strongly that to report a case of tuberculosis was to trample upon the patient's right to conceal his disease from the public. We now know that this has not been the result. In the average community, and especially in the large cities, very few persons, who would not have known even if the case had never been reported, find out that a man has tuberculosis. The rights of the individual to keep his affliction concealed from the general public are, therefore, still carefully safeguarded and preserved, and at the same time the greater rights of the community to be protected from infection are also safeguarded and preserved.

Public opinion has advanced to the point where it insists that no man has the right to endanger the lives or happiness of other persons. This has been proved true in the financial world as well as in the medical. This trend of public opinion is maintaining itself consistently and will never change so long as society continues to go forward.

The requirement that the venereal diseases be reported as are other dangerous communicable diseases has met with opposition in the same quarters where the reporting of tuberculosis was fought. But it is generally recognized to be a sound public-health measure, and as such has now been enacted into law in 32 States. It is to be strongly emphasized that in reporting these cases the right of the individual to keep his disease from the public eye is carefully safeguarded, even more so than in the case of tuberculosis. In most States the names and addresses of the patients are not required, unless their conduct makes them a danger to the public health, or they stop treatment before they are made noninfectious. In the former case the public welfare requires legal action; and in the latter case it is to the patient's own

good that he or she be compelled to complete the course of treatments. There is no question but that public opinion will sustain this measure, and all other reasonable measures for the control of the venereal diseases, as soon as the people generally are well informed on this problem. Every physician, therefore, who reports his cases of venereal diseases to the board of health, according to his State laws, is placing himself in line with the soundest and most modern social progress, and whoever conceals these cases from the State health authorities is antisocial and reactionary.

In the case referred to the executive committee of the medical college unanimously condemned the utterance and stand taken by the elderly professor, and, in spite of his high standing and his past excellent work, the State university has made it plain that it will tolerate no such expression of opinion from one of its staff. The dean of the school of medicine in a letter to the Public Health Service said that for eight years their school and university had stood *for the control of venereal diseases in the same way that other contagious diseases are controlled*. The last paragraph of this letter contained the following:

We have already taken measures to remove all ground for criticism from the university, but I beg of you not to believe that Dr. ——— has represented the medical school in this matter, or that any student who heard him would have held that he did.

There have been a few instances where newly commissioned officers of the Medical Corps of the Army, who have not realized the sincere and energetic stand which the Army has taken, have made similar statements before medical bodies, to the effect that they would not report venereal diseases. As rapidly as these cases have come to the attention of the Surgeon General's Office these men have been uniformly disciplined with a severity merited by the extent of their offense. The whole influence of the Medical Departments of the Army and Navy and of the Public Health Service is being thrown in favor of the reporting of the venereal diseases. This is a part of the plan which the United States Government has officially adopted for controlling these dangerous infections.

This plan has been personally approved by the Surgeons General of the Army, the Navy, and the Public Health Service. They would never have approved it if it had been a wild theory or untried scheme. They approved it because it has been tried in certain cities and States in this country, and in other parts of the English-speaking world, and has proved itself to be the best plan yet devised for controlling these diseases. They approved it because venereal diseases are the greatest single cause for the disablement of our soldiers and sailors, and because accurate statistics for the civilian population would probably show that these diseases cause equally as serious losses among our industrial and other workers.

The Government adopted this plan when it did because this country had entered on a stupendous war with Germany and needed the full and unbroken service of every soldier and sailor and every civilian worker, man, woman, and child. The venereal diseases, as the greatest single foe to health and efficiency, *must* be brought under control, and just as rapidly as possible. To this end the Government urges every physician to report his cases of venereal disease in accordance with his State laws, and thus add further to his patriotic services to the Government at this time.

The more bonds the fewer casualties.